

CORPUS CHRISTI TIMES  
2 JULY 1980

# Pendulum swings too far

In response to abuses discovered in the CIA's past, the pendulum has perhaps swung too far in the direction of controls imposed upon U.S. intelligence agencies. Now that process is being reversed; Congress has been considering new charters for the CIA and for the FBI, which would loosen the reins a little, in order to provide the country with the degree of intelligence capability it must have.

But a plan drafted by a group of Republican senators — all of them allied with GOP nominee-apparent Ronald Reagan — would carry the pendulum too far in the other direction. It would open the possibility of new civil rights violations, and re-establish conditions in which intelligence activities could be carried on with too little oversight and restraint.

The proposed charter would allow the CIA to engage in spying on American citizens, removing present restrictions and establishing a sort of super-snoop — an Office of Counterintelligence — which would direct any intelligence agency to investigate any Ameri-

can citizen suspected of a range of wrongdoing.

It further would allow the agencies to write their own guidelines for using mail-opening, electronic surveillance and even burglary against their targets, aliens or Americans, without obtaining court orders.

And it would create a director of national intelligence to oversee all the agencies engaged in spying. That individual would be appointed by the president and not be subject to congressional confirmation. Further insulating the spy agencies from Congressional oversight, it would provide for the agencies to be headed by directors appointed for 10-year terms,

and removable only for cause.

All of this reorganization might make life easier for the intelligence agencies, granted. But in the process it would risk a repeat of the worst abuses of CIA power in our recent past — and in some cases, expand the possibilities of such abuses occurring.

The nation needs a functioning CIA; of that there can be no doubt. The world is simply too dangerous and unfriendly a place to have it otherwise. At present, the CIA does seem hampered to a degree in the efficient performance of its necessary duties by overzealous regulations; some reform is needed, but not on the magnitude of the GOP proposals.